

Jacob Ross

PYNTER BENDER

A NOVEL (EXTRACT)



SANTAY WAS the woman who had given him back his eyes. Hers was the first face he'd ever seen, the first lips that had shaped words before his eyes, the first eyes he'd ever looked into with his own.

They hadn't prepared him for her coming. Santay was Tan Cee's friend - the woman who they said lived in a small wooden house above their valley, who spoke to the departed and knew every plant on earth that cured or killed. She knew poisons that could put a man to sleep for good or kill the fire in his loins. Tan Cee told him that. She also told him that men never went to her, only the women did. They carried their illnesses, their children and their tiredness to her.

And there were those like Tan Cee who, every new moon, travelled to her place, lit a fire in her yard, danced and sang songs which she repeated to him from time to time.

He'd woken up one morning and she was there - a woman with a man's voice. He knew it was a woman because there was more breath around each word, and of course, her smell. Men smelt of sweat and earth and meat-things. They never smelt of plant-things.